

Row over school link to 'arms dealers'

Calls for a report into the access 'arms manufacturers' are being given to school pupils have been rejected by Edinburgh councillors.

Concern from parents, pupils and teaching union the EIS, over the presence of firms involved in the trade sparked a call from Scottish Greens councillor Steve Burgess for a review.

But while councillors were happy to acknowledge the concerns raised, they voted against investigating it further.

Instead they changed the wording of Councillor Burgess' motion from 'arms manufacturers' to 'defence companies' and recognised the opportunities they provide young people with in the Capital.

Councillor Burgess brought his motion to a meeting of the council's education, children and families committee this week.

The committee heard the manufacturers compared to tobacco firms which are not allowed to go into schools and promote their business to pupils at events or career fairs.

Mr Burgess' motion called on the committee to "note that arms manufacturers have been able to access council schools to promote their businesses to children and young people; note concerns raised by parents, the EIS and the High School Student Union about this practice; and request a report detailing existing council policy and guidance for schools

relating to company access to schools and careers fairs.”

However Councillor Christoper Cowdy, Conservatives, said the defence industry played a vital role in the country and should be encouraged.

He said: “There is no doubt the defence industry provides great benefits to world stability, Without it we would have rogue states just taking over the place.”

The Liberal Democrats proposed an amendment to the motion which used the alternative phrase ‘defence companies’ and replaced the call for a report with the statement that the committee ““notes that defence companies in Edinburgh and the surrounding local authority areas offer a significant number of apprenticeships which provide much needed vocational opportunities”.

The committee backed the amended motion by six votes to five.

By Marie Sharp Local Democracy Reporter