

Committee:	Scrutiny Committee for Education
Date:	12 June 2002
Title of Report:	Scrutiny Reviews
By:	Scrutiny Lead Officer
Purpose of Report:	To seek the views of members on whether they wish to select a new review in light of the re-configuration of the Scrutiny Review of Attainment of Pupils in Early Years

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**Recommendation:**

**For the committee to note the change to the Scrutiny Review of Attainment of Pupils in Early Years and decide if it wishes to identify a new scrutiny review in its place**

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**1. Introduction and background information**

1.1 In March 2002 this scrutiny committee identified the attainment of pupils in early years as a scrutiny review. A project board consisting of Councillor John Barnes (Chair) Kathryn Field and John Livings was appointed to undertake the review. This Board has met on three occasions and has made progress in establishing the issues which need to be investigated.

1.2 Alongside this review, and intended to run concurrently, is a Best Value Review of Community/Lifelong Learning which the Audit & Best Value Scrutiny Committee would be undertaking. However, due to specific changes to a number of services, such as the Youth Service and Adult Education, which will no longer be major services delivered by the Education dept, the original scope of the BV review has had to be rethought.

1.3 After consultation with the chair of the Audit & Best Value Scrutiny, the chair of this Committee, the Cabinet and the members of the early years scrutiny review project board, it has been agreed that the existing scrutiny review of the attainment of pupils in early years will be re-configured to a best value review and incorporate the Early Years Childcare and Development Partnership. This will replace the Community/Lifelong Learning Best Value Review.

1.4 As a result this decision there is no longer a scrutiny review being undertaken by this committee. However, there are two areas which were considered in March 2002 as potential scrutinies but not acted upon. Appendix I describes these areas in more detail.

1.5 Members of the scrutiny committee are being asked to decide if they wish to undertake a new scrutiny review. In coming to a decision on what that review might be, members may wish to, not only look at the suggestions in appendix one, but also take into consideration any other issues arising from :-

- The contribution of scrutiny to policy development;
- The definition of 'core services' for Education;
- the key issues within the Education Department identified by the Lead Cabinet Member/Chief Officer;

- matters relating to the Forward Plan;

It will also be important to consider:

- individual member involvement in best value review project boards;
- The resources needed (both member and officer time) to carry out any further reviews.

## 2. **Recommendation**

2.1 Members are asked to note the change to the scrutiny review of early years and discuss the suggestions in appendix one, alongside any others suggested by members, and decide;

- a) whether to identify a new area for review, and if so;
- b) what this will be, and;
- c) the methodology and personnel need for undertaking it.

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5 June 2002

## Appendix One

### Education Scrutiny Committee - Potential Scrutiny Reviews

The following two suggestions remain on the table from the identification of issues the Committee decided were important in January 2002 after the publication of the OFSTED report on the LEA. The first of these suggestions was seen as a higher priority for scrutiny after the Early Years attainment review had been undertaken.

#### 1. **Combating racism/equality issues**

It was agreed at the Scrutiny Committee meeting in March that this is an area which would benefit from Elected Member involvement, as the findings have implications for the whole of the County Council's policy in aspects of equal opportunities and racism.

The current situation is that the Education Development Plan has a priority entitled 'Global Citizenship' that aims to encompass the recommendations of the report. A Senior Adviser in the School Improvement Service has a key responsibility to lead on this issue and an appointment of an Equalities Officer has been made within the Education department.

The recommendation accepted by the Scrutiny Committee in March 2002 was that it would await the actions of the LEA in moving this matter forward and when appropriate engage in a policy development scrutiny.

This is probably the most appropriate time to undertake a **policy development scrutiny**, so that the Scrutiny Committee can be actively involved in the creation and/or development of any new initiatives/policy as it/they evolve.

#### 2 **ICT in the Curriculum**

This was identified as an area for development by the OFSTED inspectors. However, the Director of Education was unhappy about the 'unsatisfactory' judgement. Action is being taken to address the recommendations in the OFSTED report.

The Committee decided in March to receive frequent reports from the Director of Education on the progress of the action plan. It is expected that there will be a progress report on this at the October meeting of this Committee.

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Scrutiny & Best Value Co-ordinator.

31 May 2002

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