

Committee: **Scrutiny Committee for Education**

Date: 23 April 2003

Title: Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education held at 10.00 am at Pelham House, St Andrews Lane, Lewes, East Sussex

Subject: Minutes

Attending: Field Garvican Livings Mrs Waite, Whetstone and Woodall

Mr T Campbell (R C Diocese)
Mrs J La Coste (Parent Governor)
Mrs S Maynard (Parent Governor)

Also in attendance: Councillor Simmons, Lead Cabinet Member for Education

Lead Chief Officer's - Rob Graham, Assistant Director of
representative Education

Scrutiny Lead Officer Peter Davidson

Legal Adviser Jonathan Ruddock-West, Assistant Director of Legal and
Community Services

33. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

33.1 RESOLVED - to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 10 December 2002 as a correct record subject to the deletion of the last sentence of minute number 25.2.

34. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

34.1 Councillors Barnes, Kramer and Mr J Taylor (C of E Diocese)

35. DISCLOSURE OF INTEREST

35.1 Councillor Field declared a personal, non pecuniary interest in those parts of item 37 below which related to careers guidance by virtue of being a Director of Sussex Careers Service.

36. REPORTS

36.1 Reports on the matters dealt with in the minutes below are contained in- the minute book.

37. CONNEXIONS

37.1 The Committee received a presentation from the Assistant Director of Education.

37.2 The Committee noted the presentation and welcomed the success of the Personal Adviser role.

38. UPDATE ON SCRUTINY OF 6 TERM YEAR

38.1 The Committee received an oral report from the Scrutiny Lead Officer.

38.2 The Committee was reminded that the Scrutiny Review of the 6 Term Year commenced in October 2002 and over the last month the Board had been establishing terms of reference and specific areas of scrutiny. Consultation would take place through a questionnaire/leaflet and the period for consultation would be from 19th May until 19th July. The Committee noted that the schools had been previously informed about the consultation taking place and that it would not only take into account the views of schools and governors, but also the views of parents. The consultation leaflet would also be made available to members of the public via libraries and would be advertised in the local press.

38.3 The Committee noted that the question being asked through the consultation period was whether the status quo was preferred as against a 6 term year proposed by the LGA. The Committee raised concerns that resources which should be concentrated upon educating children and raising standards were being diverted to a consultation process in relation to the school calendar.

38.4 The Committee noted the comments made and that a more detailed report would be submitted to its next meeting in July.

39. SCRUTINY PROGRAMME 2003/2004

39.1 The Committee considered a report by Director of Legal and Community Services.

39.2 The Committee noted that the Community Services Scrutiny Committee was due to be disbanded the following day. This would mean that some of that committee's scrutiny activities would now fall into the Education Scrutiny Committee remit.

39.3 The Committee discussed the scrutiny activities they may wish to undertake and agreed that it would be useful to receive a presentation on how the education budget works. The Director of Education agreed to make arrangements for a presentation to be given by the Committee's Financial Adviser, Greg Roberts, at a future date to be arranged.

39.4 The Committee suggested that as a priority it should scrutinise the attainment of vulnerable children. The Director of Education informed the Committee that the department did not have enough statistical based evidence in this area and it may be more helpful at this point to receive a report from the Director of Education defining what is meant by the term 'vulnerable children'. The Committee requested that the Director of Education would submit this paper to the Committee at its next meeting in July.

39.5 The Chairman suggested that another priority was the recruitment, retention and training of school governors. The Committee agreed that this should take the form of a Scoping Review to be undertaken by:

Councillor Field and Mrs Maynard.

39.6 The Committee also discussed the merits of scrutinising the Connexions Service. The Director of Education explained to the Committee that it may be too early for such a review and suggested that it would be more helpful to submit an end of year monitoring report to the Committee at their next meeting in July.

39.7 The Committee noted that as there was a chance the membership of the Committee could change after the Annual Council meeting, it may also be prudent to decide which other areas to scrutinise at the next meeting in July. In view of this, the Director of Education was also asked to submit a paper about Family Learning and what has been achieved in this area, so that a decision could be reached at the next meeting as to whether the Committee would undertake a Scrutiny Review of this area.

39.8 The Committee also agreed that the Scrutiny review of the People's Network and Electronic Learning should be postponed until January 2004.

39.9 RESOLVED - to note the report and the comments mentioned above in relation to the scrutiny activities the Committee wished to undertake and also to note that the following reports would be submitted to the next meeting:

- a) Vulnerable Children - definition
- b) Monitoring Report on Connexions
- c) Family Learning - achievements

40. COUNCIL PLAN: QUARTER 3 MONITORING REPORT

40.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive, together with supporting papers which had been circulated prior to the meeting.

40.2 Members expressed concern about the practice of modifying or deleting targets where it was apparent that they would not be met. This practice made it difficult to obtain a consistent, overall picture of performance in a given service area. The Director of Legal and Community Services informed the Committee that a seminar on the monitoring process in general was being arranged for early June and that this would provide the opportunity for members to discuss these issues in more detail. In addition, the Committee noted that the Scrutiny and Best Value Co-ordinator had undertaken a review which would be looking at re-setting the targets.

41. FORWARD PLAN FOR PERIOD 1 MAY TO 31 AUGUST 2003

41.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 1 May to 31 August 2003.

41.2 The Committee requested further information from the Lead Cabinet Member about an item to be considered by him on 16 May 2003 in relation to financial support for post 16 students.

41.3 The Lead Cabinet Member for Education informed the Committee that he would be making a decision in relation to the enhancement to the scheme for financial support for post 16 students.

41.4 The Committee noted without comment the remainder of the Forward Plan for the period 1 May to 31 August 2003.