

Committee: Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries

Date: 16 March 2004

Title: Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries held at 10.00 am at County Hall, St Annes Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex

Subject: Minutes

Attending: Barnes Field Garvican Kramer Livings McPherson Waite Whetstone Woodall

Mr J Taylor (C of E Diocese)
Mrs S Maynard (parent-governor)

- Chief Officer - Denise Stokoe, Director of Education and Libraries
- Legal Adviser - Jonathan Ruddock-West, Assistant Director of Law and Performance Management
- Scrutiny Lead Officer - Peter Davidson
- Financial Adviser - Greg Roberts
- ALSO PRESENT - Dr Irene Campbell, Assistant Director of Education: Libraries and Community Learning.

At the invitation of the Chairman of the Committee, Councillor Murphy attended and spoke on minute 40 (Best Value Review of Attendance in Schools)

35. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

35.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 26 November 2003.

36. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

36.1 Mr A Campbell.

37. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

37.1 Councillor Mrs Waite declared a non-prejudicial interest in item 39 by virtue of her being a member of the Chartered Institute of Librarians and Information Professionals.

38. REPORTS

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

39. LIBRARY SERVICE AND SCRUTINY

Presentation

39.1 The Committee received a presentation from the newly appointed Dr Irene Campbell, Assistant Director of Education, Libraries and Community Learning.

39.2 Dr Campbell referred the Committee to a Government document entitled, "Framework for the Future" and informed the Committee that its purpose as a national document was to reposition libraries into the 21st Century. The document sets out certain priorities including promoting reading and literacy, committed staff and providing information to members of public. The Committee also noted that, through Framework for the Future, £3m had been made available to assist library services across the country to focus on some of these priorities and put the framework into practice. East Sussex Libraries had been approached to undertake a pilot project using some of this funding.

39.3 Dr Campbell also informed the Committee that currently the East Sussex Library Service was only meeting 14 out of the 27 Government Standards. As part of her role, Dr Campbell informed the Committee that she would be striving to ensure that the East Sussex Library Service was achieving 20 out of 27 of these Standards by the end of the year.

39.4 Councillor Barnes suggested to the Committee and to Dr Campbell that more work was needed to address the social isolation of the elderly. The Library Service could play an integral part in this. Councillor Field suggested that more work was also needed in assisting young people with their research skills and perhaps this could be examined when prioritising. Dr Campbell agreed to take these points on board when considering the Services priorities over the next few months. The Committee welcomed the presentation.

39.5 The Committee also discussed the arrangements for a training day and tour of some of East Sussex Libraries. It was agreed that the Scrutiny Lead Officer would liaise with the Libraries Service and finalise arrangements for a library tour for the Committee to be held on 22 June 2004. The Committee would be informed about the arrangements in due course.

39.6 RESOLVED – to note the presentation.

40. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOLS

40.1 The Committee considered an introductory report by the Chairman of the Project Board and also the final report of the Project Board. Councillor Murphy, Chairman of the Project Board was in attendance and presented the report to the Committee. The Committee was also reminded that the report was here for information purposes only, as the report had already been submitted to the Audit and Best Value Scrutiny Committee for comment.

40.2 Although the Committee could not comment on the content of the report, they requested further information concerning the circulation of the document. The Director of Education informed the Committee that the report would now be submitted to Cabinet where the Director would give a formal response. The Committee suggested that the findings of the review should be incorporated into school booklets and the Director agreed that although the circulation had not been finalised, it would seem sensible to forward the review's findings and recommendations via a circular to all schools and governors in East Sussex.

40.3 RESOLVED – to note the report.

41. TRANSITIONAL GRANT

41.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education and Libraries. The Financial Adviser to the Committee was in attendance to explain the Transitional Grant and the Transitional Support Grant to the Committee in more detail.

41.2 The Committee noted that one of the conditions of the grant was that all Local Education Authorities are required to submit a Transitional Support Grant to the DfES for approval. The Plan which the Committee had before them would be reviewed later in the year in light of experience and a revised plan would be produced in the autumn.

41.3 RESOLVED – to make the following comments on the Transitional Support Plan to help shape potential use of the Transitional Grant for 2005/06:

- (i) the Support Plan must not be seen to be subsidising incompetence;
- (ii) any schools receiving a grant must have robust financial management planning in place; and
- (iii) there should be training for Head Teachers, Bursars, and Governors in the managements of budgets.

42. SCRUTINY ACTIVITIES

42.1 The Committee considered a report by Director of Law and Performance Management.

42.2 The Committee discussed whether it would be appropriate to undertake a review of the effects on the Council of the “Every Child Matters” legislation. The Director of Education informed the Committee that it was hoped that there would be a Members seminar on this later in the year and in view of the work still to be undertaken, it would be more sensible to bring an update report back to the Education Scrutiny Committee in June.

42.3 The Committee noted the two suggestions for reviews identified in the report, but agreed that the following possible reviews should take priority:

- (i) bullying and peer group pressure in East Sussex schools;
- (ii) curriculum innovation;
- (iii) admission of vulnerable children to schools and protocols.

42.4 RESOLVED – to (1) undertake a Scrutiny Review of bullying and peer group pressure in schools; and

(2) appoint the following members to the Project Board:

Councillors Barnes and Woodall.

{Note: Mr T Campbell would be approached to sit on the Project Board – if Mr Campbell was unable to sit on the Board, Councillor Field agreed to be a reserve member}

43. ESTABLISHMENT OF A REVIEW BOARD TO SCRUTINISE DEPARTMENTAL PERFORMANCE IN SELECTED BVPIs

43.1 The Committee considered a report by Director of Law and Performance Management.

43.2 The Committee raised a number of concerns about scrutiny reviews being dictated by BVPIs, but noted that each scrutiny committee would be carrying out a review in the key service areas and by examining the BVPIs the review board could recommend future topics and detailed areas of focus for scrutiny activity based on poor performance in BVPIs. The

Committee noted that this would not mean they could not suggest possible reviews beyond that of BVPIs.

43.3 The Committee also noted that some of the BVPIs identified on pages 58 to 61 of the report were already being considered as part of the work of the Education Standards Panel and therefore there was not any need to duplicate this work.

43.4 RESOLVED – to appoint the following members to a project board to scrutinise departmental performance in selected BVPIs:

Councillors Kramer, Livings and McPherson.

44. COUNCIL PLAN 2003-04 MONITORING REPORT – QUARTER THREE

44.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Performance Management.

44.2 The Committee noted that with regard to strategic partnerships and community learning, a number of targets in the area had been significantly exceeded which the Committee welcomed.

44.3 RESOLVED – to note the Council Plan for 2003/04 Monitoring Report.

45. THE FORWARD PLAN

45.1 The Committee noted without comment the Forward Plan for the period March 2004 to June 2004.

46. FUTURE MEETINGS AND APPOINTMENT OF PARENT-GOVERNOR

46.1 The next meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries would be on 17 June 2004. With regard to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries in September and a possible clash with the Fire Authority meeting, it was agreed that the meeting would still be held on 16 September and if Councillor Livings was unable to attend, Councillor Field as Vice-Chair of the Committee would be Chairman for the meeting.

46.2 The Committee noted that Mr Sam Gregory from Hampden Park Primary School had been appointed as the Parent-Governor representative on the Committee.