

Committee: Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries

Date: 17 June 2004

Title: Meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries held at 11.00 am at County Hall, St Annes Crescent, Lewes, East Sussex

Subject: Minutes

Attending: Barnes Field Gadd Garvican Kramer McPherson Whetstone

Mr T Campbell (RC Diocese)
Mr J Taylor (C of E Diocese)
Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor)
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 - Mary Hayler and outgoing Lead Officer - Peter Davidson

2. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

2.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the meeting of the Committee held on 16 March 2004.

3. DISCLOSURES OF INTERESTS

3.1 On minute 7, Mr Taylor informed the Committee that the Church of England Diocese had a partnership agreement with William Parker School, Hastings. Mr Campbell reminded the Committee that he had an interest in the item as Head of St Richard's Catholic College, Bexhill. Both of them were satisfied that their interests were non-prejudicial.

4. URGENT ITEM

4.1 The Committee agreed to take as an urgent item the arrangements for considering Library issues.

5. REPORTS

5.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are contained in the minute book.

6. BEST VALUE REVIEW OF THE MEANS OF RAISING ATTAINMENT OF PUPILS IN EARLY YEARS : FINAL MONITORING REPORT

6.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Education and Libraries.

6.2 On recommendation 13, the Director of Education and Libraries would re-enforce with CfBT the value of including a broad range of performance data in training for governors.

6.3 RESOLVED – (1) to note the progress made on meeting the recommendations in the Best Value Review;

(2) to propose that the planned training under recommendation 11 (awareness of the foundation stage, early years settings and the work of the Early Years Development and Childcare Partnership) is delayed until after the 2005 County Council elections and that, in the meantime, a short briefing is emailed to members and to ask that local members are kept informed of issues in their local areas; and

(3) to ask that, in future, the location of schools is included where this is not obvious from its name.

7. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HASTINGS AND ROTHER POST 16 REORGANISATION : FINAL REPORT BY PROJECT BOARD

7.1 Mr Taylor, Chairman of the Project Board, explained that it had not been possible for the Board to present its final report to this meeting of the Committee as several key documents would not be in the public domain until early next week. Despite this, the Committee was required to report to the Cabinet on 29 June when it would be asked to approve the Joint Board's proposal for the future organisation of post 16 Education in Hastings and Rother for consultation.

7.2 He reminded the Committee that the Board had been asked to scrutinise the process that had been followed during the review rather than the decision that was likely to emerge.

7.3 He explained the evaluation framework that had been used which was based on the Sedley requirements for consultation. The Board had drawn up a "balance sheet" setting out the positives they had identified in terms of the consultation process and the areas where they felt the process could have been handled better. Mr Taylor summarised the main content under each heading.

7.4 The four elements in the Sedley requirements were as follows – consultation should take place when the proposals were at a formative stage; the proposer must give sufficient reasons to permit an intelligent response; there must be adequate time for consultation and for consultees to respond; and the product of the consultation must be taken into account in the final proposals. On the first and third elements, the Board was satisfied that the requirements had been complied with. On the second element it was providing a qualified response and on the fourth element it was unable, at this stage, to give an unqualified response that this had been complied with as it had not yet seen the report to be submitted to the Cabinet. The scrutiny process had not brought to light any matter that could be regarded as invalidating the consultation process.

7.5 The Board felt that a further review of the next stages in the process might be appropriate but, if such a review was commissioned, asked that a new Project Board be set up for this.

7.6 RESOLVED – (1) to endorse the Project Board's findings;

(2) to ask the Project Board to circulate its draft report to the members of the Committee for comment. Members noted that this would not be possible until late on Monday 21 June and that responses would need to be returned by the end of the day on Tuesday 22 June;

(3) to authorise the Project Board, with the Chairman of the Committee, to finalise the report to be made to the Cabinet on 29 June;

(4) to ask the Project Board to issue a press release on its report once it is published;

(5) to thank the Director of Education and Libraries and her staff for their co-operation and support and to thank Mr Davidson for his work on the review; and

(6) to suggest that there were lessons from the Project Board's report that had wider application and that the report should, therefore, be circulated widely, including to partner organisations.

8. COUNCIL PLAN : END OF YEAR MONITORING REPORT

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

8.2 The Committee discussed target KST 2.4. The target set had been unrealistic. Separate targets should have been set for each quarter so that trends could be identified. The Committee stressed the importance of getting excluded pupils back into full time education as quickly as possible. The Director of Education and Libraries explained that progress had been made with this. Discussions were planned with schools about ways of making further progress. This had already been identified as an area for scrutiny.

8.3 RESOLVED - to note the achievements and progress detailed in the end of year Council Plan monitoring report and to endorse the undertaking of a scrutiny review of excluded pupils.

9. FORWARD PLAN

9.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 28 June to 21 September 2004.

9.2 It noted the proposal to hold a members' seminar on the future proposals in relation to Children's Services in September.

9.3 RESOLVED – to note the Education items on the Forward Plan.

10. LIBRARY SERVICES

10.1 The Committee discussed the importance of giving adequate attention to Library Services in its programme of work. The Director of Education and Libraries reported that the outcome of the Peer Review of Library Services would be available at the end of June and she would be reporting on this to the next meeting. This would provide an opportunity for the Committee to consider which Library issues it would be appropriate to scrutinise.

11. THANKS

11.1 The Committee thanked Peter Davidson for his valuable work as a Scrutiny Lead Officer in supporting this Committee over the last two years and wished him well for the future.

11.2 The Committee welcomed Mary Hayler, his successor.