

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries held at County Hall, Lewes, on 30 November 2004.

27. PRESENT - Councillor Gadd (Chairman)
Councillors Field (Vice-Chairman), Garvican, Kenward,
McPherson and Whetstone
- Mr T Campbell (RC Diocese)
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 - Mary Hayler
- ALSO PRESENT - The Lead Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor
Glazier and the Lead Cabinet Member for Children and
Young People; and Libraries, Councillor Mrs Stroude,
who were in attendance for the reconciling policy and
resources item referred to in paragraph 30.

28. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

28.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 16 September 2004.

29. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

29.1 Councillors Barnes, Kramer and Woodall; and Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor representative).

30. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES

30.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive and all Chief Officers. The Chairman welcomed the Lead Cabinet Member for Education, Councillor Glazier and the Lead Cabinet Member for Children and Young People; and Libraries, Councillor Mrs Stroude, who were in attendance to answer Members' questions in respect of their portfolios and the reconciling policy and resources exercise.

30.2 The Director of Education and Libraries introduced the report and emphasised that the proposed savings identified in the report are part of a modelling exercise, and are not budget proposals.

30.3 RESOLVED – to inform the Cabinet of the Committee's comments as follows:

The unanimous view of the Committee was that:

- the Cabinet should give further consideration to the fact that a large proportion of the LEA's budget is subject to existing contractual and statutory commitments,

which cannot be reduced in the short to medium term. As a result, the Committee felt that Cabinet should ask the Education and Libraries Department to model savings only in areas of the budget over which the LEA has control;

- the Committee felt that the Youth Development Service provides an essential service and expressed great concern over the proposed modelled cuts to this budget. The Committee therefore asked Cabinet to consider other alternatives to these proposed savings.

31. LIBRARY AND INFORMATION SERVICES PEER REVIEW

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

31.2 RESOLVED – to note the progress of the Peer Review Action Plan.

32. PROGRESS REPORT ON ACTION FOLLOWING THE BEST VALUE REVIEW OF ATTENDANCE IN SCHOOLS

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

32.2 RESOLVED – to note the progress made to date in implementing the recommendations made in the Best Value Review report on school attendance.

33. DfES 5 YEAR STRATEGY FOR CHILDREN AND LEARNERS

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

33.2 RESOLVED - to note the report.

34. COUNCIL PLAN: QUARTER 2

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

34.2 The Committee questioned whether the current practice of revising targets that the Council seemed unlikely to achieve was the most effective way of helping Councillors and the public gauge the performance of the Council, and discussed an alternative way of keeping an original target in the Plan without the substitution of a new one.

34.3 The Director of Education and Libraries responded by conceding that other methods could be employed so that original targets could be retained. However, the Director reminded Members that at the end of the financial year, the Council publish both the revised and original targets so that Members and the public could judge progress against both targets. In particular, the Director also felt that it was appropriate to revise targets that were failing as a result of external pressures and that in these circumstances revised targets should be allowed as they more accurately reflect the current backdrop against which the targets had to be achieved.

34.4 RESOLVED – (1) to note the achievements in paragraph 2 and the recommendations for action made in appendix 1 of the report;

(2) to reconvene the Best Value Performance Indicators (BVPI) Review Board to consider targets for 2005/06. The Board would comprise Councillors Kenward, Kramer and McPherson; and

(3) to ask Cabinet to consider the Committee's view that failing targets in the Council Plan should not be revised.

35. FORWARD PLAN

35.1 The Committee noted without comment the Forward Plan for the period 1 December 2004 to 31 March 2005.