

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR EDUCATION AND LIBRARIES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries held at County Hall, Lewes, on 8 March 2005.

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36. PRESENT - Councillor Gadd (Chairman)  
Councillors Barnes, Field (Vice-Chairman), Garvican,  
Kenward, Kramer, McPherson, Whetstone and Woodall
- Mr J Taylor (C of E Diocese)  
Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor)  
Mrs S Maynard (Parent Governor)
- Chief Officer - Denise Stokoe, Director of Children's Services,  
Education and Libraries
- Legal Adviser - Jonathan Ruddock-West, Assistant Director of Law and  
Performance Management
- Scrutiny Lead Officer - Mary Hayler

### 37. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

37.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting of the Committee held on 30 November 2004.

### 38. APOLOGIES FOR ABSENCE

38.1 Apologies for absence were received from Mr T Campbell (RC Diocese).

### 39. BVPI TARGETS 2005-06

39.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the Education and Libraries BVPI Project Board. The Project Board had scrutinised the targets set for BVPIs 38, 39, 44 and 159d.

39.2 The Scrutiny Lead Officer informed the Committee that new guidelines had been published by the Office of the Deputy Prime Minister. The Committee noted that the guidelines instructed that BVPI 44 had been deleted and BVPI 159 had been amended and simplified.

39.3 The Committee agreed that although BVPI 44 had been deleted it was important to remain focused on the number of pupils permanently excluded in the County. In view of this the Committee concluded that the department should still present a progress report on permanent exclusions to the September Scrutiny Committee.

39.4 RESOLVED – to take the following action in relation to BVPI 38 and BVPI 39:

- a) the annual report produced by the Schools Improvement Service clearly shows which indicators are BVPIs;
- b) targets for these BVPIs are scrutinised by the Education Standards Panel at their meeting in June;
- c) the Education Standards Panel reports back its findings and recommendations to the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries at the appropriate time.

39.5 RESOLVED – that in relation to BVPI 44 and BVPI 159d the Education and Libraries Department should present a progress report on permanent exclusions to the September Scrutiny Committee.

#### 40. ADMISSIONS TO SCHOOLS

40.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services, Education and Libraries.

40.2 At the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries in September it was agreed that the Schools Admission Forum should be asked to consider a resolution made by Eastbourne Borough Council about admission arrangements. The Committee requested that the Forum report back their findings. The Forum decided not to recommend any changes to the current admission arrangements.

40.3 The Committee also discussed admissions to schools and transport difficulties. There were concerns about the cost of transport to the LEA budget and concerns that the withdrawal of the public bus services has had an impact upon the difficulties of travelling to and from schools. This was a particular problem where pupils attend schools out of their local area.

40.4 RESOLVED – to note the content of the report and that there will be no amendment to the admission arrangements for 2006/07.

#### 41. LIBRARY SERVICE PEER REVIEW ACTION PLAN

41.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services, Education and Libraries. Irene Campbell, Assistant Director, Libraries and Community Learning, was in attendance to answer any of the Member's questions.

41.2 The Committee noted that on the leadership side within the library service, there had been a teambuilding exercise and that under the guidance of the consultant, the Service was now looking at the roles of middle management and checking that what they are actually doing matches their job descriptions. On the consultation side a user survey of lapsed borrowers was being distributed to find out why people are not using the libraries.

41.3 The Committee noted that since the reduction in mobile libraries, work was being carried out in order to ensure those people who lived in rural areas or could not attend libraries were still able to access services. The Department was looking at different ways of reaching these users and in particular was promoting the use of the virtual library which is an online service where people can view library catalogues and order books directly.

41.4 The Committee also highlighted another area which may need further analysis and requested that further information be gathered about the relationship between libraries and estate management. The Committee agreed that this should be included in the next report on the Library Service Peer Review which would be submitted to the Committee later in the year.

41.5 Overall, the Committee noted that there has been good progress across the three objectives of the action plan. In particular, the Vision for Library and Information Services 2005-2008 had been developed, the consultation process has begun and an audit had been carried on existing performance measures. To date, approximately £19,000 of the total funding of £94,000 (which is made up of £70,000 from MLA and £24,000 matched funding) had been spent. The Plan attached to the report indicated the progress made against individual targets.

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

#### 42. PROGRAMME OF POSSIBLE FUTURE SCRUTINY TOPICS

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

42.2 The Committee noted that the structure of scrutiny committees may change after the election. This decision will be made at the first County Council meeting on 24 May. It was hoped that a programme of topics for potential scrutiny would assist the relevant committees, whatever structures were adopted for scrutiny. The Committee also noted that there would be a training session on scrutiny and performance for Councillors. The Committee agreed that the Parent Governors and diocese representatives should be included in the training sessions.

42.3 With regard to the programme circulated to the Committee, the following amendments were made:

- a) with regard to Special Educational Needs, it was agreed that there should be a representative from the scrutiny committee on the departmental project board;
- b) with regard to a possible review of the anti-bullying strategy it was agreed that a progress report should be submitted to the committee in November 2005; and
- c) with regard to a possible review of admission policies and forward planning, it was agreed that this should also look at transport issues. A paper on admission and transport policies would be submitted to the committee in June.

42.4 RESOLVED – to agree the programme of topics for potential scrutiny, subject to the amendments suggested above, for consideration by the new committee following the elections.

#### 43. AUDIT COMMISSION SCHOOL SURVEY RESULTS

43.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services, Education and Libraries.

43.2 The Committee noted that the 2004 survey was extremely positive and identified significant improvement. The highest rated items (judged by schools to be between good and very good) for East Sussex corresponded closely to those identified nationally: the quality of financial support and advice; the quality of professional personnel advice and casework; and school improvement, in particular, the LEA's support to develop self-management (including self-evaluation) in schools.

43.3 There were some concerns identified in relation to personnel issues and catering. The Committee agreed that the quality of diet for the improvement of education standards was crucial. The Committee noted that there was a Group currently looking at the catering contracts for schools and it was agreed that a position statement should be submitted to the next Scrutiny Committee in June.

43.4 RESOLVED - to note the content of the report and to request the Director of Children's Services, Education and Libraries submit a position statement on catering in East Sussex Schools to the next Committee in June 2005.

#### 44. REVIEW OF SEN CONSULTATION

44.1 Councillor Field declared a personal interest by virtue of her husband's employment at an independent special school.

44.2 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services, Education and Libraries. Jean Haigh, SEN Strategy and Review Manager was in attendance to answer any of the Member's questions.

44.3 Jean Haigh was able to inform the Committee about some of the issues which had arisen from the Review so far. The Committee noted that one of the major concerns amongst consultees was the increase in behavioural issues. The evidence showed that there was a rise in the number of children who have autistic spectrum disorder. It was recognised by the Committee that early intervention is important and crucial.

44.4 The Committee agreed that there should be a scrutiny committee representative on the departmental project board for this Review. In order to assist with this process, it was also agreed that the board's terms of reference would be circulated to the Committee by the Director of Children's Services, Education and Libraries.

44.5 The Committee requested that an update report on the Review should be submitted to the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries in June 2005.

44.6 RESOLVED – to note the briefing paper attached to the report.

45. COUNCIL PLAN: QUARTER 3

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

45.2 RESOLVED – to ask the Education Standards Panel to scrutinise performance against BVPI 39 - KST 1.4 and KST 1.5 and report back to the Scrutiny Committee for Education and Libraries.

46. FORWARD PLAN

46.1 The Committee noted without comment the Forward Plan for the period 1 March 2005 to 30 June 2005.