

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 9 September 2005.

16. PRESENT - Councillor Gadd (Chairman)
Councillors Elkin, Field (Vice-Chairman), Kramer, Ost, St Pierre, Mrs Tidy and Whetstone
- Mr T Campbell (RC Diocese)
Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor)
Marie Casey, Hastings and St Leonards PCT (Health)
- Chief Officer - Matt Dunkley, Director of Children's Services
- Legal Adviser - Jonathan Ruddock-West, Assistant Director of Law and Performance Management
- Scrutiny Lead Officer - Gillian Rickels
- ALSO PRESENT - Councillor Simmons (for minute 21)
Regan Delf, Principal Advisor for SEN and Inclusion (for minute 23)
Bernadine Bacon, Head of Access to Education (for minute 22).

17. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

17.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 16 June 2005.

17.2 Assistant Director of Law and Performance Management reported that consultation with the ODPM was continuing regarding voting rights for diocesan and parent governor representatives.

17.3 Councillor St Pierre has been elected to SEN Review Project Board.

17.4 A scrutiny board looking at BVPIs was not set up as there were no appropriate BVPIs to examine at this point. Most are about attainment and Standards Panel look at these.

18. APOLOGIES

18.1 Mr J Taylor (C of E Diocese).

19. REPORTS

19.1 Copies of the reports referred to below are included in the minute book.

20. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

20.1 Mr Campbell declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in items on the agenda as the Principal of St Richards Catholic College.

20.2 Councillor Field declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in item 6 as a Governor of Claverham Community College, Battle.

20.3 Councillor Field declared a personal, prejudicial interest in items as her husband was Business Manager at Frewen College, Northiam to which the Council sends some of its special educational needs agency placements.

20.4 Councillor Kramer declared a personal non prejudicial interest in item 6 as the parent of a student who attends Bexhill College.

20.5 Councillor Ost declared a personal, non prejudicial interest in items on the agenda as a director of the Newhaven Community Development Agency.

21. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES

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

21.2 The Director of Children's Services reported on the initial financial planning guidelines for Children's Services. The Committee noted that the Government required the Council to draw a distinction between the LEA schools element of the budget and the budget for children's social care. The Committee noted that from April 2006 the Government would give a grant direct to school and the Council would have no control over the level of passporting to schools.

21.3 Councillor Simmons, the Lead Cabinet Member for Learning and School Effectiveness, reported on his policy steers and answered questions.

21.4 The Committee expressed concern at the Government's proposal that schools have two separate financial years tied to both the academic year and financial year and agreed that the Director of Children's Services should continue to lobby the Government not to pursue this.

21.5 RESOLVED – (1) to note the initial planning assumptions set out in the Cabinet report Reconciling Policy and Resources – State of County 2005;

(2) to request that the Director of Children's Services continues to lobby the Government in relation to the proposals that would result in schools having two financial years; and

(3) to request that a further briefing in relation to the Children's Services budget be presented at a future meeting.

22. POST 16 REVIEW IN HASTINGS AND ROTHER

22.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services. The Committee noted that paragraph 1.1c of the report should read 'plans for a rural Rother College would not proceed under this modified proposal.'

22.2 The Director of Children's Services reported that the deadline for the LSC to respond to the Secretary of State's modified proposal had been extended until 31 October 2005. The options open to the LSC, if they did not agree to the Secretary of State's modified proposal, were:

- (a) to resubmit the original proposal
- (b) to submit a modified proposal
- (c) to withdraw their proposal.

22.3 The Committee noted that further information had been requested from the Minister regarding the advice she had received and used as a basis for her decision.

22.4 It was noted that Thomas Peacock Community College, Hillcrest School and The Grove School had previously agreed to the closure of their sixth forms on the basis that all schools in Hastings and Rother would be closing sixth forms.

22.5 It was reported that there had been a scrutiny review of the process of the consultation undertaken by the Joint Review Board established by the LSC and the LEA when conducting the review of post 16 education in Hastings and Rother. The scrutiny review had looked at the consultation process rigorously and overall concluded that the process had been good.

22.6 RESOLVED – (1) to note the Director’s oral update and continue to monitor the situation;

(2) to note the deadline for the response to the Minister has been extended to 31 October 2005;

(3) to request that the Director of Children’s Services keeps the Committee informed of developments regarding the Post 16 review; and

(4) the Committee noted the positive outcome of the previous scrutiny review of the consultation process.

23. BEHAVIOUR MANAGEMENT AND ALTERNATE PROVISION FOR EXCLUDED PUPILS

23.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services.

23.2 RESOLVED – (1) to note the scope and variety of behaviour support provided to schools in supporting those pupils at risk of exclusion and the improvements made in securing provision for permanently excluded pupils within stipulated timeframes; and

(2) to note that a further report will be submitted to the Committee in March 2006 to update Members on progress.

24. PROGRESS TOWARDS BVPIs 38 AND 39

24.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children’s Services.

24.2 RESOLVED – (1) to note the progress being made towards these challenging BPVI targets;

(2) to request an up-date on this report for its next meeting in November when 2005 examination results should be available in full and analysis completed; and

(3) to request that future reports should highlight performance including English and Mathematics GCSE and excluding GNVQ results.

25. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2005-2006 WORK PROGRAMME

25.1 The Committee considered the future work programme for Scrutiny Committee meetings.

25.2 The Committee agreed a scrutiny review of the School Improvement Service should be undertaken. The Committee appointed Councillors Field, Ost and Whetstone to the Project Board.

25.3 The Committee agreed that a report on 'Youth Matters' would be submitted to the Committee in November.

25.4 'Update on School Meals Service' to be added to the forward plan for March 2006.

26. FORWARD PLAN

26.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period 5 September to 31 December 2005.

26.2 RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan.