

SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 24 November 2005.

PRESENT Councillor Gadd (Chairman)
Councillors Elkin, Field (Vice-Chairman), Kramer, Maynard,
Ost, St Pierre, Mrs Tidy and Whetstone

Mr J Taylor (C of E Diocese)
Mr S Gregory (Parent Governor)
Mrs S Maynard (Parent Governor)
Councillor Silverson (District / Borough representative)
Mrs Carole Shaves MBE (Sussex Police Authority representative)

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 The Lead Cabinet Member for Learning and School
Effectiveness, Councillor Simmons and the Lead Member for
Children and Families, Councillor Mrs Stroude who were in
attendance for the Reconciling Policy and Resources item
referred to paragraph 31.

27. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

27.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 9 September 2005.

27.2 The Committee noted Mrs Carole Shaves sent apologies for absence at the previous meeting.

28. APOLOGIES

28.1 Apologies for absence were received from Marie Casey, Hastings and St Leonards PCT and Mr T Campbell, RC Diocese.

29. REPORTS

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

30. DISCLOSURES OF INTEREST

30.1 Councillor Field declared a personal, prejudicial interest in item 5 (minute 31) as her husband is a Business Manager at Frewen College, Northiam to which the Council sends some of its special educational needs agency placements. Councillor Field agreed to leave the meeting for item 5 if the matter was discussed.

30.2 Councillor Kramer declared a personal non prejudicial interest in item 5 as a Hastings Borough Councillor, as Hastings Borough Council fund a full time Play Development Worker.

31. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES

31.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive and all Chief Officers. Lead Cabinet Members Councillors Simmons and Mrs Stroude were in attendance to answer Members' questions in respect of their portfolios and the reconciling policy and resources exercise.

31.2 The Director of Children's Services introduced the report and emphasised that the proposed savings identified in the report are part of a modelling exercise and are not budget proposals.

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

- Requested that information on trend analysis on use of services, and risk assessments are provided for the next round of reconciling policy and resources to aid consideration of proposed savings.
- Requested a list of abbreviations and acronyms used in reports to be circulated with the agenda papers in future.

Learning and School Effectiveness

- Playlink
The Committee remained to be convinced regarding the proposed savings to Playlink and requested a further written briefing.
- CfBT/School Improvement Service
Expressed concern at the reduction of grant totalling £200,000 to CfBT/SIS for school improvement, as it is a high risk saving. It is proposed that the proposed reduction is mitigated by setting up a suspended fund of £50,000, which if not utilised for school improvement, could then be re-allocated elsewhere.

Children and Families

- Youth Development Service
Expressed concern that the cuts proposed to the Youth Development Service were high in proportion to the overall budget.
- Looked After Children Services
Agreed the risk reward ratio is not substantial enough and it is too high a risk to assume success in reducing the number of 'in-house' fostering placements by 5. The Director of Children Services was requested to present alternatives to Cabinet.

Management and Support

- The proposed savings are broadly supported.

32. QUARTER 2 MONITORING REPORT AGAINST THE COUNCIL PLAN

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

32.2 RESOLVED - to (1) note the Standards Panel have monitored performance and therefore further comment is not required.

(2) appoint the following members to a BVPI Review Board to consider BVPI targets for 2006/07: Mrs S Maynard, Councillor Elkin and Councillor Mrs Tidy

33. CHILDREN'S SERVICES DEPARTMENT AND CHILDREN'S TRUST

33.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services.

33.2 The Committee noted the minutes from the Children's Trust Member Project Group, who have met twice and feed into the CT Executive Team Meeting were omitted from the appendices.

33.3 RESOLVED – to note the report.

34. COMMUNITY PARTNERSHIP FINANCE GRANT 2006-07

34.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Adult Social Care.

34.2 RESOLVED – to note the provisional recommendations made for the allocation of the Community Partnership Finance Grant in 2006/2007.

35. SCHOOLS ADMISSIONS AND HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT SCRUTINY REVIEW UPDATE

35.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chair of the Project Board.

35.2 RESOLVED – to note the progress made to date on this review.

36. SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT SERVICE SCRUTINY REVIEW UPDATE

36.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chair of the Project Board.

36.2 RESOLVED – to note the progress made to date on this review.

37. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2005-2006 WORK PROGRAMME

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

37.2 RESOLVED – that a written position statement be provided on the Music Service for consideration.

38. FORWARD PLAN

38.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period November 2005 to March 2006.

38.2 RESOLVED – (1) to note the Forward Plan; and

(2) that the Director of Children's Services provides an update on the Local Area Agreements relating to Children's Services.