

## SCRUTINY COMMITTEE FOR CHILDREN'S SERVICES

MINUTES of a meeting of the Scrutiny Committee for Children's Services held at County Hall, Lewes, on 26 September 2006.

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PRESENT	Councillor Gadd (Chairman) Councillors Elkin, Field, (Vice-Chairman) Kramer, St Pierre, Mrs Tidy and Waite  Sarah Maynard (Parent Governor) Jeremy Taylor (C of E Diocese) Tony Campbell (RC Diocese)
Chief Officer	Matt Dunkley, Director of Children's Services
Legal Adviser	Jonathan Ruddock-West, Assistant Director of Law
Scrutiny Lead Officer	Gillian Mauger
Also present	Councillor Glazier, Lead Member for Children's and Adults' Services Councillor Mrs Stroude, Lead Member for Children and Families Helen Davies, Deputy Director of Children and Families Fiona Johnson, Head of Children's Safeguards & Quality Assurance (for item 5) Jean Haigh, Head of SEN and Disability (for item 8)  Frank Myers, Deputy Director of Diocese of Arundel and Brighton Catholic Schools Service (for item 7)

### 9. MINUTES OF LAST MEETING

9.1 RESOLVED – to confirm as a correct record the minutes of the last meeting held on 15 June 2006.

### 10. APOLOGIES

10.1 Apologies for absence were received from Councillor Ost, Councillor Whetstone, Andrea Bamber, Councillor Silverson, Marie Casey and Carole Shaves.

### 11. DISCLOSURE OF INTERESTS

11.1 Councillor Field declared a personal interest in item 8 in that her husband is business manager at Frewen College, Northiam. Councillor Field agreed to leave the meeting if discussions took place relating to agency placements.

11.2 Councillor Kramer declared a personal interest in item 5 in that she is a member of NSPCC Full Stop campaign and the Children Are Unbeatable! Alliance; and also a personal interest in item 7 in that her daughter receives educational maintenance allowance.

11.3 Mr Campbell declared a prejudicial interest in item 7 in that he is Principal of St Richards Catholic College. Mr Campbell agreed to leave the meeting whilst this item was discussed.

## 12. REPORTS

12.1 Copies of the reports and tabled items referred to below are included in the minute book.

## 13. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN – MEMBER AND SENIOR MANAGEMENT OVERSIGHT OF SERVICES

13.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services. The report advised the Committee of the systems in place for senior managers and Members to ensure that services to safeguard children are properly co-ordinated and managed effectively.

13.2 The Lead Member for Children and Families and the Deputy Director of Children and Families confirmed the forms used when visiting sites are supplemented with extra information when required and are used as a check and balance against information already received by the Deputy Director. The Committee questioned the Lead Member for Children's and Adults' Services over the monitoring function and were assured that all mechanisms are in place, are working well and have been commended by the Commission for Social Care Inspection

13.3 The Committee was advised a mechanism will be set up to allow members to have safeguarding data from Local Partnerships for Children groups relating to their particular ward.

13.4 RESOLVED – to (1) note the systems in place for oversight of the safeguarding work of children's social care and the findings of the Lead Member visits and senior manager file audits.

(2) agree to receive an annual report on the monitoring and audits undertaken by the Lead Member and senior managers.

## 14. SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN – LOCAL SAFEGUARDING CHILDREN BOARDS

14.1 The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services. The report advised Committee members of the inter-agency arrangements in place to safeguard children in East Sussex.

14.2 The Director of Children's Services confirmed that East Sussex Council is affiliated to the NSPCC and they do have a representative who sits on the board and audit group. The Committee requested that this affiliation be widely publicised across East Sussex County Council.

14.3 The Committee requested that when the Board brief members they also include all members of opposition parties. The Lead Member for Children's and Adult Services confirmed this would be actioned.

14.4 The Committee requested that a report on the work during the previous year is included when receiving annual reports on the Safeguarding Board business plan.

14.5 The Committee requested that a presentation on the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board be given at a future meeting.

14.6 RESOLVED – to (1) note the arrangements for the establishment of a Local Safeguarding Children Board in East Sussex and the business plan for 2006/7.

(2) agree to receive annual reports on the Safeguarding Board business plan and update report on its working during the previous year.

(3) receive a presentation on the work of the Local Safeguarding Children Board at a future meeting.

## 15. RECONCILING POLICY AND RESOURCES

15.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chief Executive and all Chief Officers. The report outlined the policy steers for the service under the Committee's purview.

15.2 The Director of Children's Services introduced the report and advised the Committee that the Council has established the cash limits for the next 3 years (subject to changes in grants received) therefore instead of bidding for increases to the budget, the department are debating how to achieve the cash limit and are aware that any new pressures need to be absorbed within the cash limits already set.

15.3 The Committee agreed to set up the first meeting of a scrutiny board in December 2006. All available Committee members are invited to attend.

15.4 The Cabinet Lead Member for Children's and Adult Services tabled a paper outlining proposed changes to the current policy steers.

15.5 The Committee suggested that the policy steers should be presented in an alternative way so that the individual steers are grouped into themes. The Cabinet Lead Member for Children's and Adult Services advised he preferred not to group them using education as a theme but would welcome alternative suggestions by email.

15.6 RESOLVED – to (1) support proposed changes to the policy steers;

(1) set up a scrutiny board empowered to act on behalf of the full committee with regard to future input into the Reconciling Policy and Resources process this year. The first meeting for all available Committee members to attend, will be held in the Committee Room, County Hall at 10.00 am on 13 December 2006.

(2) note the State of the County report agreed by Cabinet on 1 August and, in particular, the architecture for the Reconciling Policy and Resources process this year.

## 16. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF HOME TO SCHOOL TRANSPORT

16.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the review board which presented the outcomes of the review and the proposed recommendation.

16.2 The Chairman of the Review Board thanked the board members and officers for their contributions to the review.

16.3 The Chairman invited Mr Frank Myers (Deputy Director of Diocese of Arundel & Brighton Catholic Schools Service) to address the Committee on behalf of the Roman Catholic Diocese.

16.4 Mr Myers advised the Committee he had written to the Chairman of Scrutiny Committee outlining his concerns and verbally added further points including informing the Committee that in the region of 66% of the pupils attending St Richard's Catholic College entitled to discretionary transport; financial investment in the Catholic school system; inclusiveness of catholic schools compared to non faith schools; the effect on school performances should discretionary budgets be cut. He informed the Committee that the Diocese was keen to be involved in dialogue prior to any review.

16.5 The Cabinet Lead Member for Children's and Adults' Services assured the Committee that the Best Value Review Board would talk to a wide audience including the Church of England Diocese of Chichester and the Roman Catholic Diocese of Arundel and Brighton.

16.6 RESOLVED – to consider the report of the Project Board and support its recommendation.

#### 17. SPECIAL EDUCATIONAL NEEDS DEPARTMENTAL REVIEW

17.1 The committee considered a report by the Director of Children's Services updating the Committee on the progress made with regard to the key recommendations of the SEN review.

17.2 The Committee requested annual reports on progress be presented at future Scrutiny committee meetings in order that progress on initiatives highlighted in the report can be monitored.

17.3 RESOLVED – to (1) note the progress made to date on the actions arising from the Departmental review of special educational needs provision in the county.

(2) request that annual reports be presented to the Committee in order that progress on initiatives highlighted in the report can be monitored.

#### 18. SCRUTINY REVIEW OF THE YOUTH OFFENDING TEAM

18.1 The Committee considered a report by the Chairman of the project board.

18.2 RESOLVED – to endorse the Project Initiation Document.

#### 19. QUARTER FOUR MONITORING REPORT AGAINST THE 2005/06 COUNCIL PLAN

19.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Policy and Communications. The report provided the Scrutiny Committee with an end of year summary of performance against the 2005/06 Council Plan.

19.2 The Committee requested confirmation that the figures relating to 'Improved quality of school leadership and management across the County with fewer schools in special measures or with serious weakness' in the report are correct. The Director of Children's Services confirmed he would investigate and advise the board.

19.3 RESOLVED – to (1) note the achievements during 2005/06 and the end of year performance results;

(2) Councillor Field, Councillor Mrs Tidy, Councillor Elkin, Councillor St Pierre and Sarah Maynard volunteered to be members of a scrutiny review board to investigate in detail a number of performance indicators relating to educational attainment; use of value added data and report back to the next committee with its findings and recommendations.

#### 20. SCRUTINY COMMITTEE 2005/2006 WORK PROGRAMME

20.1 The Committee considered a report by the Director of Law and Personnel.

20.2 The Committee agreed to remove the review of behaviour support from the work programme.

20.3 The Director of Children's Services advised a green paper on Corporate Parenting is due to be published in November and therefore the report due to the Committee in December on Corporate Parenting may be influenced by it.

21. FORWARD PLAN

21.1 The Committee considered the Forward Plan for the period October to December 2006 with regard to items relating to the Children's Services Scrutiny Committee.

21.2 RESOLVED – to note the Forward Plan without comment.