

**HERTFORDSHIRE COUNTY COUNCIL**  
**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES**  
**SCRUTINY COMMITTEE**  
**WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 2003 AT 10.30 A.M.**

Agenda Item No.

**1**

**SCRUTINY UPDATE REPORT**

*Report of the Scrutiny Support Officer, Anne Fisher*

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**1. Purpose of the report**

To inform Members of action taken on scrutiny issues since the last meeting of the Committee.

**2. Summary**

This report highlights action taken since the last meeting of the Scrutiny Committee, and details any items of scrutiny work that have been referred to the Cabinet, Executive or Chief Officer for further action.

**3. Conclusion**

Members are asked to note the action taken in respect of scrutiny issues.

## **1. CASUAL ADMISSIONS**

### **Minute extract 16 October 2002:**

‘The Committee would wish to write to the DfES to express the importance of adequate consultation periods, in accordance with the DfES’s own consultation code of practice.’

### **Action taken since 16 October 2002:**

The Director of Children, Schools and Families wrote to the DfES on 31 October 2002 expressing concern at the short consultation period on the revised code of practice for admissions.

A reply was received on 7 November 2002 explaining that the short consultation period was necessary in order to have the Codes and Regulations ready to come into effect from January 2003, so that the necessary work arising from them could be completed to affect 2004 admissions.

The Topic Group has listened to the views of parents, headteachers and officers about the current process for casual admissions and the final report on their findings is on this agenda at item 6.

## **2. PROVISION FOR CHILDREN AND YOUNG PEOPLE WITH AUTISTIC SPECTRUM DISORDER**

### **Minute extract 16 October 2002:**

‘The recommendations set out in paragraphs 4 and 5 of the report should be referred to Cabinet so that budget issues could be considered.’

### **Action taken since 16 October 2002:**

Recruitment to the Specialist Autism Advisory Support Service is now complete and additional capacity is being built into the 2003 special school budget to accommodate increased numbers of children with autism. A training programme for 2003/04 is in the process of development building on lessons learned from the scrutiny process.

The recommendation for mainstream support bases is being built into the proposals for the 2003/04 budget to be considered by the Cabinet on 28 January.

The scrutiny work is still ongoing and has involved a number of further visits and meetings with parents. There will be a final report of the Topic Group to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee in March 2003.

### **3. OPERATION COACHMAN 2002**

#### **Minute extract 16 October 2002:**

‘Officers would work on the responses to Richard Smith’s questions to find out the current position in Hertfordshire; the role of the Passenger Transport Unit Enforcement Officers would also be clarified.

These responses would be reported to members and a small Topic Group, set up under the auspices of the Environment Scrutiny Committee, could undertake further scrutiny if required. It was recommended that this Group would include representatives from CSF, including Cliff Broadhurst, and the Adult Care Services Scrutiny Committee.’

#### **Action taken since 16 October 2002:**

A meeting was held on 9 January 2003 to progress partnership working between the County Council’s Passenger Transport Unit, the Police and Vehicle Inspectorate and District Council Hackney Carriage officers.

The list of issues raised by Richard Smith has been circulated to District officers; enforcement and contract issues are being followed up. This information will be collated and sent to members.

### **4. MEETING THE PLACEMENT NEEDS OF LOOKED AFTER CHILDREN**

#### **Minute extract 16 October 2002:**

‘It was agreed that this issue should be referred to the Corporate Parenting Panel, to consider in particular the recruitment of foster carers, support for families, speeding up the adoption process and the development of a plan of action. The work of the Corporate Parenting Panel on this should be reported back to a future meeting of the Scrutiny Committee.’

#### **Action taken since 16 October 2002:**

Meeting the Placement Needs of Looked After Children was considered by the Corporate Parenting Panel on 20 November 2002. The Panel requested further information on adoption and court processes, placement costs and analysis of reasons for the increase in the numbers of looked after children in Hertfordshire. This information will be considered by the Panel at its meeting in May 2003.

## 5. MONITORING OF SCHOOLS

### Minute extract 16 October 2002:

‘The School Improvement and Advisory Service should encourage Heads and Governors to share information on the 9-cell matrix and its implications for schools.

Members wanted to know where schools in their division were placed in the matrix; if they required this information they would ask for it. A copy would also be made available in the Members’ Lounge; members would understand the sensitivity of such information.

The Committee felt that the work of the Achievement Panel should be completed, including calling expert witnesses, before any scrutiny work was started.’

### Action taken since 16 October 2002:

Three folders have been produced and placed in the Group Rooms. These contain the composite 9 cell matrix positions for **Autumn 2001**. The new information for **Autumn 2002** is currently being collated and copies will be made available as soon as possible in the new year.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

None

### Background information referred to by the author whilst compiling this report:

Minutes from previous scrutiny committee meeting