

**To: All Members of the County Council  
and of the Children, Schools and Families  
Scrutiny Committee  
All Chief Officers**

**From: COUNTY SECRETARY'S  
DEPARTMENT**

**Ask for: Julia Harries**

**Ext: 25563**

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**My Ref: JH**

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cc: CSF officers  
All officers named for 'actions'  
Committee section

**CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SCRUTINY COMMITTEE  
WEDNESDAY 22 JANUARY 2003**

**MINUTES**

**ATTENDANCE**

**MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE**

T I Ambrose, D E Billing, P T J Channell, R S Clements (Vice-Chairman), A D Dodd, K F Emsall, A K Gray, F Guest, D W Hills, T G M Kent (Chairman), L R Kercher, D E Lloyd, M H O'Neill, S Quilty, R H Smith, J Taunton

Parent Representatives:

P Cherry	North area
M W Thompson	South area
C Broadhurst	East area
T Douris	West area

Church Representatives:

J Reynolds	Education Board of the Diocese of St Albans
M Stothard	Archdiocese of Westminster Schools Commission

Teacher Representatives:

P Brooks National Association of Governors and Managers  
I Gibson National Association of School Master/Union of Women Teachers  
J Hayes National Union of Teachers  
G Rowlands Association of Teachers and Lecturers  
S Springett National Association of Headteachers

Health and Voluntary Sector Representative:

J Linskill Director of Nursing, Children's and Older People's Services, North Herts  
and Stevenage Primary Care Trust

Also present:

G R Churchard, E M Clarke, F J Escott, M Green S E Jones, P A Ruffles, D T F Scudder,  
I Simpson

Executive Members:

D A Ashley, D Beatty, R J M Ellis, R I N Gordon, D B Lloyd, M H T Janes

**CHAIRMAN'S ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Membership changes:

K F Emsall had replaced B C Engel for this meeting only  
D E Lloyd had replaced B J Lamb for this meeting only

**MINUTES**

The minutes of the meeting of the Children, Schools and Families Scrutiny  
Committee held on 16 October 2002 were confirmed as a correct record and signed  
by the Chairman.

	ACTION
<b>PUBLIC PETITIONS</b>	
None	
<b>QUESTIONS</b>	
None	
<b>PART 1 ('OPEN') BUSINESS</b>	
<b>1 SCRUTINY UPDATE REPORT</b>	
[Officer contact: Julia Harries Tel: 01992 555563]	
1.1 As agreed at the recent Chairman/Vice Chairman/Spokesman scrutiny training, the Committee received a report detailing action taken on scrutiny issues since the last meeting on 16 October 2002.	
1.2 A letter from Rob Smith giving further details of action taken on Operation Coachman had been circulated to the Committee.	
1.3 Members requested that the letter referred to above and another letter sent to the District Councils be circulated to all members of the Committee [attached]	Tony Edwards Julia Harries
1.4 Members of the Services to Disabled Children Topic Group requested that a report reviewing the effects of their scrutiny work be presented to a meeting of the Topic Group, before being included in the next scrutiny update report to the Scrutiny Committee on 19 March 2003.	Cheryl Hopkins Gill Webster Julia Harries Julian Edwards
1.5 It was noted that the meeting of the Corporate Parenting Panel on 20 January 2003 had heard evidence from 4 foster carers regarding their experiences; this had helped members to understand the issues around foster care and would lead to improvements in service.	

1.6 **Conclusions:**

- |       |   |   |
|-------|---|---|
| (i)   | The follow up on services for children with disabilities would be cleared first by a meeting of the Topic Group which had considered this issue.  | Cheryl Hopkins<br>Gill Webster                                    |
| (ii)  | The need for a Topic Group on 'Operation Coachman' would be considered once responses had been received from the Hackney Carriage Authorities. Copies of both letters would be sent to all members of the Scrutiny Committee. | Rob Smith<br>Tony Edwards<br>Adrian Hardy<br>Julia Harries        |
| (iii) | The next scrutiny update report to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 19 March 2003 would include a more in-depth review of the effects of completed scrutiny work, in particular services to disabled children.        | Cheryl Hopkins<br>Gill Webster<br>Julia Harries<br>Julian Edwards |

**2 THE FUTURE OF THE PINES PRIMARY SCHOOL**

[Officer contact: Lindsay Martin, Senior Manager – School Places  
Tel: 01992 556718]

- 2.1 The Committee considered a report detailing the responses received to the recent consultation on the proposed closure of The Pines Primary School in August 2003.
- 2.2 Mrs Michele Hourihan spoke to the Committee on behalf of the parents at The Pines School and supporting the merger of The Pines with Wheatcroft School.
- 2.3 Frank Escott, Local Member, spoke in favour of a merger of The Pines with Wheatcroft School. [see attachment]
- 2.4 **Conclusions:**
- (i) Closure of a school was always a difficult decision and members had taken care to understand the complex educational issues involved.

	ACTION
(ii) The Committee thanked the parents from The Pines for making a presentation to the meeting and sharing their views; the interest and involvement of the Pines parents was recognised.	
(iii) The Committee discussed the proposal to merge The Pines and Wheatcroft Schools and operate a split site.	
2.5 <b><u>Response to Cabinet:</u></b>	
That the Committee supported the proposal to publish a statutory notice to close The Pines School in August 2003 when the remaining children would be able to transfer to Wheatcroft School.	David Roberts
<b>3 THE CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES SERVICE PLAN 2003/04</b>	
[Officer contact: Julian Edwards, Service Planning Manager Tel: 01992 555941]	
3.1 The Committee considered a report detailing the responses received to the recent consultation on the Children, Schools and Families Service Plan 2003/04.	
3.2 <b><u>Conclusions:</u></b>	
(i) Members made detailed comments on the Performance Indicators at pages 7, 11, 13, 14-16 and 23, where targets had been adjusted.	
(ii) Members made detailed comments on the pre-amble to the Plan, Strategic Areas 1, 2, 7 [parent involvement] and 8 [primary provision and planning secondary and nursery provision. Strategic Area 7 would be addressed in the report to Cabinet with changes to the text to reflect Cliff Broadhurst's concerns regarding recognition of parent's involvement.	Julian Edwards
(iii) Members debated measurement, in particular regarding bullying and behaviour management. They recognised the need to measure the right activities, use data effectively and continue to improve systems to collect data.	

	ACTION
(iv) Members were impressed by the consultation process and the contribution of young people.	
(v) This was a detailed document and members could see how it was rolled out in schools.	
(vi) All involved in the production of the Plan were congratulated and thanked for their work.	
3.3 <b><u>Response to Cabinet:</u></b>	
This was an excellent Plan, supported by wide consultation and it should be adopted.	David Roberts
<b>4 THE CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES PROPOSED RESOURCE BUDGET 2003/04 - 2006/07</b>	
[Officer contact: Martin Surtees, Assistant Director - Resources Tel: 01992 555710]	
4.1 The Chairman thanked Martin Surtees for all his hard work and wished him well for the future.	
4.2 The Committee considered a report detailing the proposals made by Cabinet on 19 December 2002 for the revenue budget and capital programme for the Children, Schools and Families Service.	
4.3 The draft minute of the Resources Panel on 15 January had been circulated to the Committee. [set out below]	
4.4 Everyone involved with the preparation of this budget was commended for their hard work.	
4.5 <b><u>Conclusions:</u></b>	
(i) Members were pleased to see that the budget reflected the outcome of scrutiny work by the Committee and Topic Groups on behaviour and achievement.	
(ii) Specific questions were asked on the budget.	

(iii) Members expressed concern for the current and future funding position.

4.6 **Response to Cabinet:**

The recommendations of the Resources Panel on 15 January 2003 [set out below] were unanimously agreed by the Committee:

CSF RESOURCES CABINET PANEL  
15 JANUARY 2003

**EDUCATION FUNDING SETTLEMENT ISSUES AND  
HCC/SCHOOLS BUDGETS 2003/04**

The Panel

1. reiterates its grave concerns that
  - (a) the 5.1% cash increase in EFSS exceeds inflation, pay and pension costs, demography and unavoidable pressures by a mere £2.3m
  - (b) the cost to Hertfordshire education of the Standards Funds Grants cut by the government amounts to £9.3m
  - (c) that no resources are available within the settlement towards the additional cost of £5m to develop the provision of three-year old nursery provision from its current level in readiness for this new statutory requirement in 2004
2. supports the proposals by the Cabinet (while regretting the additional burden passed to local council taxpayers)
  - (a) to mitigate the worse effects of the government's net cut in Standards Fund grants by raising an additional £5.9m in 2003/04 from council tax
  - (b) to raise from council tax an additional £2m per annum to fund the new strategy for behaviour and achievement
  - (c) to raise from council tax an additional £0.5m per annum to support families with vulnerable children
3. notes with alarm the prospect of substantial real-terms cuts in education funding from 2004/05 given that

- 
- (a) resources for current activities are predicted to decline by £25.6m comprising
- £9.6m through the government's removal of 'damping' for authorities with poor settlements in 2003/04
  - a further £5.1m from additional government cuts in Standards Funds
  - £5m that will have to be diverted from current spending to fund the statutory extension of three year-old nursery provision, and
  - £5.9m should the Council feel unable to continue the mitigation of the government's 2003/04 Standards Fund cuts
- (b) even if Hertfordshire receives the average increase in EFSS in 2004/05 its resources will increase by £29m, leaving a cash increase of just £3.4m (0.6%), totally inadequate to fund inflation, pay costs, demography and pressures
4. Invites the Cabinet to agree to a substantial lobbying campaign over the coming months to seek changes in the government's funding regime aimed to remove this threat to Hertfordshire's education and to invite all groups on the Council, all Hertfordshire MPs, schools, teacher associations, Early Years organisations, governors and parents to support such a campaign.
- 5 SEMINAR ON THE SCHOOL PLACES FORECASTING SYSTEM**
- [Officer contact: Jim Dalton, Assistant Director - Planning  
Tel: 01992 555862]
- 5.1 The Committee received a powerpoint presentation by Jim Dalton, Lindsay Martin and Steve Jacklin on the School Places Forecasting System, to which all members of the County Council had been invited. An information pack was circulated. [attached]

**REPORT BACK ON SCRUTINY WORK:**

**6 CASUAL ADMISSIONS**

[Officer contact: Nick Powley, Education Access Manager  
Tel: 01992 555933]

6.1 The Committee considered a report detailing the work of the Casual Admissions Topic Group and setting out options for consideration.

**6.2 Conclusions:**

(i) The Topic Group had endorsed the Scrutiny Committee's approach on waiting lists.

(ii) Recommendation 3.1c should be amended to insert in line 5 after continuing interest list: 'before parents are required to reaffirm their continued interest on a termly basis'.

(iii) The Committee recognised the need for strategies to reduce the pressure of casual admissions on certain schools, including Astley Cooper.

(iv) Concern was expressed regarding the implications of the timing of Appeals Panels for parents, volunteers and officer.

**6.3 Recommendation to the Admissions Forum:**

The Committee endorsed the recommendations set out in section 3, with the amendment to 3.1c as set out in (ii) above.

Nick Powley

Nick Powley

**NEW SCRUTINY ITEMS:****7 EFFECTIVENESS OF QUADRANTS**

[Officer contact: Cheryl Hopkins, Assistant Director  
Tel: 01992 556340]

- 7.1 In response to a request from David Billing, the Committee considered a report detailing the progress in delivering direct services to Children and Families since 2001 and giving information on three key areas of work representing cross professional working: child protection, special educational needs and attendance.

**7.2 Conclusions:**

- (i) The Committee agreed that CSF officers would arrange for all members of the County Council and of the Scrutiny Committee to attend a scrutiny session at their local Quadrant. Cheryl Hopkins
- (ii) The October meeting of the Committee would then receive a report outlining more focussed areas for consideration and further scrutiny. Cheryl Hopkins  
Julian Edwards  
Julia Harries

**8 CHILDREN, SCHOOLS AND FAMILIES AND HEALTH**

[Officer contact: Paul Clark, Deputy Director  
Tel: 01992 555755]

[Fiona Guest declared an interest in this item as a member of the North West Community Health Council and participated in the debate.]

- 8.1 In response to a request from David Billing, the Committee considered a report detailing the current links between Children, Schools and Families and the Health Service, possible structural changes with health and future developments. Julia Harries  
Ron Coxall

8.2 **Conclusions:**

- |       |   |                  |
|-------|---|------------------|
| (i)   | This report was a good foundation to work with health colleagues.   |                  |
| (ii)  | A fact finding/listening seminar in late spring/early summer would be useful, followed by a more focussed report to the meeting of the Scrutiny Committee on 15 October 2003.   | Paul Clark       |
| (iii) | The Director would discuss with Group Spokesmen the programme for this scrutiny.  | Director         |
| (iv)  | Further general information and local contacts would be included in the Members' Bulletin.  | Paul Clark       |
| (v)   | The Strategic Health Authority would be encouraged to inform Community Health Councils of the work being carried out on mental health and disabilities.   | Jessica Linskill |
| (vi)  | Concern was expressed that certain areas of the County did not have local Child Development Centres; it was recognised that services for children were available in these areas, but in a different form. Work was being carried out to address this. |                  |

**9 THE PROVISION FOR EXCLUDED PUPILS LIVING IN WELWYN HATFIELD AND HERTSMERE**

[Officer contact: Nick Powley, Education Access Manager  
Tel: 01992 555933]

- 9.1 In response to a request from Bob Mays [through the Group Spokesman], the Committee considered a report detailing the provision available for excluded pupils living in Welwyn, Hatfield and Hertsmere.

9.2 **Conclusion:**

The Committee agreed that there should be a report to the next meeting on 19 March 2003 to review the Education Support Centre position in Hertsmere and on future plans for ESCs, including funding issues.

Nick Powley  
Julian Edwards  
Julia Harries

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**ITEMS REFERRED TO THE COUNTY COUNCIL**

(Standing Order SC.7(2))

The Opposition chose agenda item 7, Effectiveness of Quadrants, to be reported to Council on 13 February 2003.

Julia Harries  
Ron Coxall

**Andrew Laycock**  
**County Secretary**